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COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(Commission decision E (47))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. Pursuant to paragraph 2 of decision E (47) the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems at their sixth session discussed their role in the new European context and endorsed the general orientations of document ENVWA/R.81 prepared by the Bureau of the Senior Advisers. They requested the newly elected Bureau, expanded to seven members, to prepare, with the assistance of the secretariat, a proposal for the restructured programme of work and revised terms of reference of the Senior Advisers for consideration by the consultation of the heads of delegations in autumn 1993 and subsequent submission to the Senior Advisers at their seventh session.

2. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of decision E (47), cooperation and coordination with the European Community (EC), OECD, UNEP and relevant organizations was promoted through, inter alia, mutual participation in respective environment-related meetings. The preparation of the report on the State of the Environment in Europe continued in close cooperation between the task force established by the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) and the UN/ECE secretariat. Close cooperation with OECD continued in the fields of management of hazardous chemicals and environment and economics through the organization, in particular, of workshops on good laboratory practice principles (Hungary, October 1992), costing techniques for environmental policies (Geneva, January 1993) and the impact of economic restructuring on the environment (Hungary, March 1993). A series of consultations were held

between the secretariats of OECD and UN/ECE on possible extension of the system of environmental performance reviews, developed by OECD for its member countries, to the entire UN/ECE region. Joint ECE/UNEP activities were launched in 1993 on strengthening environmental management capabilities in central and eastern European countries.

3. Both the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity were signed during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development by 39 ECE member countries and the European Community (paragraph 4 of decision E (47)).

4. The Senior Advisers at their sixth session considered a secretariat document on the implications at regional level of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (ENVWA/R.69) and decided to recommend to the Commission at its forty-eighth session that all Principal Subsidiary Bodies be invited to consider proposals contained therein of relevance to their respective work and to elaborate detailed proposals for action for consideration by the Commission at its forty-ninth session in April 1994. The Senior Advisers made arrangements for the elaboration of a proposal on priorities and possible detailed action to be taken by themselves in that regard, and expressed readiness to participate, in close cooperation with the Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Energy, in the organization of a regional conference on transport and the environment, provided the Commission takes concrete steps towards the holding of such a Conference (paragraph 5 of decision E (47)).

5. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of decision E (47), the Senior Advisers adopted Elements for a Long-term Environmental Programme for Europe as their contribution to the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Lucerne, Switzerland, 28-30 April 1993), and elaborated proposals for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration, for submission to the Expert Group for the Conference.

6. Among the proposals for action submitted by the Senior Advisers to the Lucerne Ministerial Conference is one on the development of more systematic implementation and verification of ECE Conventions in the field of environment, taking account of the problems of some member countries, especially those in transition. The Senior Advisers will consider the outcome of the Lucerne Conference on this subject together with the similar provision, as contained in document ENVWA/R.69, at the consultation of heads of delegations to the Senior Advisers in autumn 1993 (paragraph 7 of decision E (47)).

7. The Senior Advisers made arrangements for wide dissemination of an updated version of their 1993 report on bilateral and multilateral financial cooperation in the ECE region of relevance to environmental protection. Workshops were organized by the Senior Advisers in 1992/1993 on topical issues for countries in transition such as environmentally sound management of chemicals, integrated pollution prevention and control, and environment and economics. A draft policy document, to be prepared in the light of a series of four workshops organized in 1993/1994 under the joint ECE/UNEP activities, will be considered by the Senior Advisers at their seventh session. Activities were launched under the implementation of the ECE conventions on

environmental impact assessment, transboundary waters and industrial accidents, aimed at strengthening the capacity of countries in transition to comply with obligations under these conventions. The Seminar on Low-waste Technology and Environmentally Sound Products (Warsaw, Poland, May 1993) will consider, inter alia, ways and means for the promotion of business opportunities related to environmental technology (paragraph 8 of decision E (47)).

8. Following paragraph 9 of decision E (47), the Senior Advisers requested the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a proposal on possible action on environmental performance reviews in the light of the Lucerne Conference, for consideration by the consultation of heads of delegations to the Senior Advisers in autumn 1993.

9. At its tenth session, the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution decided that the Working Group on Strategies as a first priority will conduct negotiations in order to present to the eleventh session of the Executive Body a draft protocol for further reduction of sulphur emissions after 1993. With a view to widening the scope of the negotiations, the Executive Body amended the mandate of the Working Group to include provisions for proposals on financial burden-sharing in order to facilitate the implementation of protocols. It also entrusted the same Working Group with the task of providing to the eleventh session of the Executive Body a progress report on the second step of the protocol concerning the control of emissions of nitrogen oxides (paragraph 10 of decision E (47)).

10. Twenty-eight member countries and the European Community had signed the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context by 31 December 1992, and three countries have ratified the Convention so far (paragraph 11 of decision E (47)).

11. Twenty-two member countries and the European Community had signed the protocol on volatile organic compounds by 31 December 1992 and one country has ratified the Protocol so far (paragraph 12 of decision E (47)).

12. Twenty-six member countries and the European Community, and twenty-five member countries and the European Community had signed by 31 December 1992 the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, respectively. The Meeting of Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, held in May 1992, and the Working Party on Water Problems at its sixth session held in November 1992, discussed measures to be taken for the implementation of the accidents convention and the water convention respectively, to the maximum extent possible pending their entry into force, and elaborated relevant work-plans (paragraph 13 of decision E (47)).

13. A number of events took place during the past year related to the ECE region-wide campaign on Energy Efficiency 2000, such as the two Ad Hoc Meetings on Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones, (Moscow, Russian Federation, May 1992 and Rome, Italy, October 1992); and a meeting on Electricity and Energy Efficiency Technology and Demand Management (Oslo, Norway, June 1992). A book was published in September 1992 entitled East-West

Energy Efficiency. The following Symposia took place or are envisaged within the Project: Symposium on Energy Efficiency Measures in Industry (Bled, Slovenia, September/October 1991); Symposium on Energy Efficiency and Economic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe (Paris, France, 25-28 May 1993); Symposium on Environmental Benefits of Energy Conservation, (Moscow, Russian Federation, 20-24 September 1993); and a symposium to be held in one of the Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones in the Russian Federation with technical visits to the other demonstration zones located in or near Moscow (paragraph 14 of decision E (47)).

14. A review of national policies and strategies promoting the reduction of the risk of industrial accidents and improvement of preventive, preparedness and response measures will be undertaken at the second Meeting of Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in May 1993. The Working Party on Water Problems was entrusted by the Senior Advisers with the compilation of lists of hazardous substances and industrial sectors or industries from which these substances derive. This Working Party has also undertaken the preparation of a draft policy document covering such aspects as control of water pollutants within industrial processes and recycling of water and recovery of valuable substances. A report will be finalized for consideration by the Senior Advisers at their seventh session on recommended principles, criteria and guidelines for environmental product profiles. An ad hoc meeting will be convened by the Senior Advisers in close cooperation with OECD, in Austria in late 1994, to review the progress made regarding the application of existing OECD systems and practices on management of chemicals in ECE countries which are non-members of OECD. Following the outcome of the High-Level Meeting on Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry, held in Warsaw (Poland) from 10 to 12 March 1992 in cooperation with the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), the Working Party on the Chemical Industry decided to convene a Meeting of Experts in Warsaw on 15-16 April 1993 to assist the Polish authorities in preparing a detailed project on the possible establishment of a regional environmental management centre for the chemical industry. It also agreed to undertake a pilot project demonstrating the environmental clean-up of selected chemical production sites and decided as a first stage to identify and prioritize several potential sites in the countries in transition (paragraph 15 of decision E (47)).